

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL JOHN CUDDY, COMMANDER,
REGIONAL POLICE ADVISORY COMMAND-SOUTH VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM KANDAHAR,
AFGHANISTAN TIME: 9:00 A.M. EDT DATE: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2008

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CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, OASD PA): All right.
Well, we've had a couple others that should be joining us here shortly, but we
can -- why don't we go ahead and get started? We can conference them in as they
come along -- as we move along here.

And Colonel, still with us there?

COL. CUDDY: I sure am.

MR. HOLT: Okay. All right. Thank you very much. With us on the
Bloggers Roundtable this morning is Colonel John Cuddy who is with -- who is the
commander of the Regional Police Advisory Command-South out of Kandahar,
Afghanistan.

Colonel Cuddy, thank you very much for being with us today. COL.
CUDDY: My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Well, do you have an opening statement for
us?

COL. CUDDY: Absolutely.

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to speak with you today on
the Bloggers Roundtable. It's a pleasure to speak with you and give you an
update about our efforts to train the Afghan National Police here in southern
Afghanistan.

First, for those of you who don't know me, I'm John Cuddy. I'm
commander for the Regional Police Advisory Command for southern Afghanistan.
I've been here about four months now. My mission here is I'm responsible for
training the Afghan National Police. I have combat advisor -- (audio
interference) -- formed into police mentor teams throughout southern
Afghanistan. And we facilitate the Afghan training at the regional training
center at Kandahar as well as -- the police mentor teams train the growing --
(audio interference) -- assisting them with combat multipliers and training as
needed during operations.

I'm proud to be the commander for such an important region in this
country. Our area in Southern Afghanistan is the main effort in the fight

against the enemies of Afghanistan. Matter of fact, today I was told by an Afghan general that if Kandahar becomes secure, all of Afghanistan will become secure.

I thanked him for making me -- (audio break) -- you know, have that difficult task at hand. It's a real important job with a lot of pressure I told the general he's putting on me.

What we're doing here in the provinces of Kandahar and Zabul, Helmand and Oruzgan is designed to create a strong, professional Afghan National Police force -- (audio break) -- an impact here in regard to the security of Afghanistan as well as the international community.

We have many challenges towards this goal, but we're being innovative in -- (audio break) -- approach. For example, our efforts to train the Afghan National Police at the regional training center here in Kandahar is limited to only 350 training seats a cycle. But in order to train more than the 350 allowed this cycle, we coordinated to send police to attend training at other Afghan regional training centers.

For the first time ever, southern Afghanistan recruited and sent to training over 500 students this cycle, who will -- (audio break) -- eight weeks of focused difficult development training, become police officers, professional police officers. No other regions in the country has recruited nearly that amount during a training cycle. And as I mentioned, southern Afghanistan is a critical area in the fight, and that is why we're focused -- (audio break) -- training strategy.

In our desire to maximize the number of trained ANP in the southern region -- (audio break) -- on the current support and capacity at the Kandahar regional training center. But our approach towards training in the south is contributing to the safety, security and long-term progress in Afghanistan.

The planning and coordination required to accomplish this example, this task, quite honestly, was no easy task. There was a lot of coordination between the coalition forces, other government agencies, civilian contractors and of course the Afghan National Police leadership. However, adding an additional 150 focused district development-trained Afghan National Police to the community is certainly well worth the extra effort.

As I mentioned, we're rising far and above any other region in this country in regard to recruiting and creating well-trained Afghan police officers. Without any -- (audio break) -- area of operations, we're in the most volatile region in the country, but we are also producing the most trained Afghan police than any other region in Afghanistan. This is a real tribute to the efforts of the U.S. soldiers and our partners.

I really believe that the partnership that we have here in the south is also the best in Afghanistan. The professionalism of the Afghan National Police instructors at the regional training center in Kandahar, under the leadership of Brigadier General -- (audio break) -- the DOD civilian contractors and the military trainers, is providing a solid, well-balanced program of instruction for these recruits.

The professionalism of the instruction not only allows a flexibility in maximizing the number of students here at the RTC but also -- or the regional

training center, but also ensures that the graduating students receive -- (inaudible).

We've come a long way in our short amount of time here at the -- in the southern region, training Afghan National Police, and our effects are evident in the newly trained police officers we're seeing the districts daily.

We all know that the key to a counterinsurgency fight is the -- to build a strong police force, as they're a front line to defense against the enemies of their own country. Additionally, these police are helping secure and provide a continual -- (audio break) -- to some of the most vulnerable people of this society, the children and the women, who are easily targeted by the enemy forces.

As the focused district development program is aging, we're creating a better training program with each iteration, with police officers that graduate. We're honing their skills and understanding -- and their understanding of what it means to be a police officer in this fight, in the fight in Afghanistan.

And the Afghans are eager to play a large and important role in this fight. As a matter of fact, this is the first time that we've had a total of four female recruits going through a training cycle at once. And as you talk to them, it makes you proud that they want to contribute to (this ?) fight against the evil enemy, you know.

And it's very rare (culturally ?) to have that -- (audio break). I don't want to mislead you. We've had females in these classes before, but never having four at one time. And they're going through the training, this focused district development training, just like the men are in this course. So it's really great that they're contributing to this fight also.

With that, I'd be glad to take any of your questions and answer them for you.

MR. HOLT: All right. All right, sir. Thank you very much.

We are having a little bit of communication problem -- signal problems, I think. But we'll work through that. We'll -- bear with us here. Grim, you were first on the line, so why don't you get us started?

Q Yes, sir. Colonel, I see from your bio --

COL. CUDDY: Yes.

Q -- that you have worked numerous civil-military operations and that you were also engaged with Hurricane Katrina relief here. The question I want to ask, based on that history and your current operations, is about the way that local culture impacts these missions. What can you tell us about how Afghanistan's culture creates challenges that are different from the challenges in earlier missions, as in the former Yugoslavia or in New Orleans following Katrina?

COL. CUDDY: I think in all those operations in the former republics of Yugoslavia and, you know, certainly here in Afghanistan -- and I would even say, from a New Yorker's perspective, Louisiana was a foreign culture for me, too.

(Chuckles.) But just being the typical American and -- I'm a National Guard soldier. As a National Guard soldier and businessperson, I believe American culture is more aggressive and we push things. In Afghanistan, it's a little slower. When you plan things, you have to build in a little extra time culturally because they're not as aggressive in their execution of things in the planning stages.

It takes a little getting used to. You almost don't need to have a watch on, at times, understanding that, you know, "the morning" means the morning. And culturally, you just have to adapt to that so you're not as -- you know, pushing them. You don't want to come across as aggressive. You have to understand their culture and push it a little -- push it a little slower.

And that can be frustrating from a military perspective, U.S. military perspective, because we're always looking for, you know -- (inaudible word) -- accomplishment, getting it done quickly and moving on to the next path. And that's not the way they work here all the time.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Christopher.

Q Good morning, sir. I'd like to ask about leadership development in the ANP. What's the process or the program for developing, I guess, the equivalent of NCOs or officers, lieutenants, captains or majors in -- the equivalent of -- in the Afghan National Police?

COL. CUDDY: Well, that's a great question, Christopher, because you know one of the deficiencies they have is in their NCO corps and to a certain extent their officer corps. But from a U.S. military perspective we look at the NCOs as the backbone of the Army. The Afghans have a large gap in that piece of their organization. It's more -- (audio interference) -- you know, central authority type organization.

But all the officers and the NCOs and the patrolmen go through the focused district development training. They do take the NCOs into a leadership development course of instruction as well as the (STOs ?) and the officers, but they go through the training together to build that bond. In addition to the initial training that they have, there's also advanced courses, you know, both in firearms, transitional integration program, the criminal investigation division. A lot of the leadership development also, after the focused district development training happens with our police mentor teams. You know -- (audio interference) -- teaching them basic -- (audio interference). A lot of that is field practice that we're developing with our police mentorship in the field.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Somebody else joined us. Who's there?

Q Hey, Jack. This is Troy Steward from bouhammer.com.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Troy. Go ahead.

Q Hey, sir. How are you doing? Troy.

COL. CUDDY: Again.

Q (Off mike.)

Q What was that? You're broken up.

COL. CUDDY: I'm doing well today.

Q Oh, good. Good.

Hey, sir, a question: The recent extension, news coverage of the extension of the 2/7 Marines for another month of course is pretty current. I'm kind of curious. Did that -- since they are focused on training ANP, and that's your responsibility, did that request come from your command? Or was that something you were pushing?

Or did your higher command recognize the need, to keep them on the ground another month, and hand you that goodwill, by giving you another month of those Marines doing a fabulous job?

COL. CUDDY: (Off mike) -- request it. But I know that there was certainly -- the Marines are doing a great job out in Helmand province. They're really putting the hurt on -- (off mike) -- in that area. And I think it just made a lot of sense to continue their presence -- (off mike). But I was not part of that decision-making process.

I think it's great to have our brothers, the Marines, out there doing a good job, because they truly are disrupting the enemy operations out there and making them, you know, rethink some of their safe havens. Q All right. Thank you, sir.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Have we got any follow-up questions?

Q Yeah, I have one.

MR. HOLT: Sure. Go ahead. Christopher is that you?

Q Hi, this is Chris Radin again.

I'd like information about the payment system. Are officers being paid on a regular basis? Is there a system for pay? Are they being paid adequately and on a regular basis?

COL. CUDDY: Well, pay reform is -- (off mike) -- part of what we're developing here in Afghanistan. You know, there are anecdotal cases of police officers -- (off mike) -- for two to three months.

(Off mike) -- development process is, they get an ID card. They get an electronic fund account. Our police mentor teams -- (off mike) -- are actually conducting pay operation.

It allows us to be sure that police officers are getting paid on a timely basis, as far as making sure we're paying the right number of police officers in the field. It helps us get an accountability of what's out there -- (off mike) -- standardized manner.

The other day, I was out in Zabul province. We went -- (off mike) -- part of the province. And we checked all the checkpoints. And we were asking the soldiers, when was the last time you were paid? And he said, a month ago.

(Off mike) -- you might think that was a problem. But getting paid once a month in Afghanistan and within the last 30 days is actually, you know, a positive sign -- (off mike).

If he had told me, 60 days, I would think there was a problem. But from what I can see anecdotally going out and doing -- (off mike) -- last time they got paid, the systems are working.

I should note that Zabul province was our first focused district development cycle; it was FDD-1, so I would expect that to be a little further along in the province towards developing, you know, good procedures and what not, because it was the first one -- (inaudible) -- police mentor teams for the longest period of time.

MR. HOLT: Anyone else?

Q Hey, Jack. This is Troy. I got some follow-up questions.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Go ahead.

Q Hey, sir, the other day, talking with Colonel McGrath, he was telling us how the ANA side of the house is getting 250 up- armored per brigade. Since the ANP are on the -- really are on the leading edge in the defense of Afghanistan and have the most -- are probably out there a little bit on the edge as far as lack of equipment, has there been any push or is there any plan to try to get them stronger vehicles or better force protection that the ANA is starting to get?

COL. CUDDY: Well, the vehicle -- I've not heard any push to get them up-armored vehicles. I am not -- (word inaudible) -- that would be the right approach here, because they are the local police force. Even though we are in a counterinsurgency fight, it's -- yeah, the ANP's also -- the Afghan National Police, they take 59 percent of the casualties, the killed in action in Afghanistan. They are -- (inaudible). But for force protection, we are equipping them with helmets and body armor, as well as upgrading their checkpoints.

But I have not heard of any plans to give them, you know, up- armored vehicles. And again, quite honestly, I'm not sure that's the image we would want to project, because we are pushing this towards a community-based policing program.

Q Right, right. Thank you, sir.

Okay, the other question I have is -- prior to 2007, at least I can speak of that -- there really wasn't a plan to have ANA do more -- or I'm sorry, ANP do more marksmanship training or stay up on their marksmanship skills. They pretty much, once they went through the academy, they shot -- they never routinely fired their weapons again. Has that changed? Do you do or is there a training plan to conduct frequent marksmanship training to maintain their skills there? COL. CUDDY: Sir, those marksmanship training (programs ?) are not at a -- (inaudible). They do happen with the police mentor teams out there. And

quite candidly, the Afghan National Police get to fire their weapons quite often. Unfortunately, it's usually at a live target. But we are, you know, continuing that training with our police mentor teams out there, because as you know, some of the marksmanship practices of the past were, you know, point and shoot -- usually spray and pray kind of stuff. So we're trying to teach them that controlled marksmanship here at the FDD cycle training at the training centers.

You know, the U.S. -- (audio break) -- taught the basic marksmanship with the instructors here. But the U.S. military, we have a training team at the RTC. We'll conduct the heavy weapon training for the -- (word inaudible) -- and the heavy machine guns, because this police force needs that type of firepower out there.

So to answer your question, the PMTs conduct marksmanship, but it's not a broad strategy at this point.

Q All right. Thank you, sir.

MR. HOLT: Okay, sir.

Sir, I've got one question for you.

COL. CUDDY: Sure.

MR. HOLT: You mentioned that the -- it's been unprecedented to have 500 new recruits in your area down there. So to what do you attribute the recruiting success? Has it just been recruiting or are there other factors?

COL. CUDDY: I think that recruiting is never truly an issue in the south here. We fill our numbers. I think getting the 500 recruits through this training cycle really was a planning feat. It was an accomplishment that was that -- listen, if we go 350 each cycle, this is going to take us 10 years. If we can do 500 a cycle, it might take us six years to get everybody through. So what are the alternatives to training beyond the 350, that limited capacity? And working together with our coalition partners, the -- (audio interference) -- the civilian advisors and working with the other regions that were -- hey, there's extra capacity at the Herat training center. We worked through the coalition forces -- (audio interference) -- there for us.

So really, recruiting I don't think is an issue, despite the fact that these guys have taken, you know, significant losses in a day-to-day basis. There's people looking to -- (audio interference) -- for their country, to contribute to the security of their country and to do -- quite candidly, to do better for themselves and their lives, you know, getting a job. High unemployment in this country -- you know, they can get a job with the police and they can get the proper training. Sometimes this training is the first time they've had formal education, and they're picking up fast. So getting recruits is really not an issue. We've never had a problem coming short on it.

Going back to the cultural issue, sometimes we'll get a recruit, but they won't show up for two or three days after we're looking to get them here. But it's never an issue about getting the right number. MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Is there anyone else? Anything else?

Q Yeah, I have one more question.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Can you give us an overall status of the focused district development so far? You know, how many districts have you trained? What's your plan for the rest of the year? And I don't know if it's -- if you can tell us which districts or generally which areas in Kandahar you're training police for first, as a first priority.

COL. CUDDY: Sure. I don't want to get into exact specifics of which districts we've done. But pretty much -- (audio interference) -- with some deviation. You know, we have ring road south going through southern Afghanistan, which is Highway 1, which is the strategic -- (audio interference) -- transportation.

So we've looked at districts along the highway to focus on. But we've -- (audio break) -- we can't just exclusively say it's going to be along the highway. We have to look at the population centers that we've looked at. Obviously Kandahar -- (audio break) -- is an important city in the south. So we have put a lot of efforts -- (audio break) -- the precinct level, the precinct level, to train in Kandahar City. We've gone up to Oruzgan -- (audio break) -- gone up to Oruzgan, which is far, far away from Highway 1. But it's an important area for our, you know, enemy -- (audio break).

So really, strategically, we've looked at Highway 1. We've looked at the population centers (including at ?) Kandahar City, as well as where's the enemy, where can we disrupt his operations, and where can we start securing these people and getting them to believe that the government of Afghanistan can provide the security.

I hope that answers your question without being too specific.

Q Thanks.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And -- okay. Any other -- anything else?

Q This is Troy. I got another one.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Sure.

Q Sir, I know it's heavily discouraged or frowned upon to have ANA forces to clear homes in Kelat areas, and they've really being trying to push only ANP should be going into homes. Have -- in those instances where a threat has been in there or a forceful entry has been needed, have you been able or your team's been able to train their -- for lack of better terms -- SWAT teams or special reaction teams of the ANP on how to properly enter and clear a home, search the rooms for evidence, doing that kind of stuff, so the ANP truly don't -- you know, they don't have to try to go in and do that to clear out a(n) enemy force, or a threat?

COL. CUDDY: I would say, on a small (basis ?), we've been successful in that. Obviously, police units are not army units, and they can't -- they don't have the -- (inaudible) -- to go into a -- you know, and clear an entire area, large-scale area.

But we've been successful with some of the smaller villages -- you know, do a (secure ?) and hold and search -- (inaudible). A lot of that is with

the mentorship of the -- you know, the U.S. police mentor team and other government agencies that we may work with to do that.

So there has been training on that, on a smaller scale, which you would expect for the police force. But right now a lot of that is because of the mentorship of the police mentor teams.

Q All right. Thank you, sir.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

COL. CUDDY: Sure.

MR. HOLT: Well, sir, do you have any closing comments for us? We're running short of time here, so anything you want to -- any closing thoughts?

COL. CUDDY: Really I'd just like to thank everybody for their time.

You know, the accomplishment that we're making down here is really a tribute to the teamwork we have with the coalition forces, DynCorp with the civilian contractors, DOD contractors -- (off mike) -- Afghan national police.

A lot of these guys are just solid citizens, really want to do good for their country, real proud of the coalition effort -- (off mike) -- everybody playing an important role in the creation of what's happening here.

It truly makes me proud to be an American and work with a lot of these young soldiers, doing a good job out in the field. So I appreciate everything these guys are doing. And I hope America understands the great treasure they have in the forces they have over here doing good work.

So thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Thank you very much.

Colonel John Cuddy: He's the commander of the Regional Police Advisory Command-South, Kandahar, Afghanistan. Thanks for being with us, sir. And we look forward to another update from you here in the future.

COL. CUDDY: Thank you very much.

END.